

STATEMENT

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STATEMENT BY APHIS ADMINISTRATOR ON UPDATED ERADICATION PLAN FOR LIGHT BROWN APPLE MOTH JUNE 20, 2008

“Last evening, I was pleased to join with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary A.G. Kawamura in announcing an updated eradication plan for the light brown apple moth (LBAM). LBAM is a destructive invasive pest of numerous fruits and vegetables, as well as many species of plants and trees. It was first detected in California in March 2007, and since that time, CDFA and APHIS have worked jointly to address LBAM and prevent its further spread.

A risk assessment review conducted by the University of Minnesota in 2003 concluded that establishment of LBAM in the United States posed significant consequences to agriculture production and our natural landscape. Given these risks, it's vital that we continue momentum against the spread of this pest now, while the population level in California is relatively low. Continued action against LBAM will protect California's agricultural and natural resources, as well as those across the country.

In partnership with CDFA, we have reprioritized our eradication strategies and will employ several simultaneously to more effectively combat LBAM in California. We believe adapting these proven methods to the LBAM program provides a sound, integrated approach to eradicating this pest. Strategies we will employ include survey, mating disruption, biological control, limited organic pesticide application, sterile insect technology, and ongoing evaluation. We will also continue to enforce stringent state and federal quarantine regulations to prevent LBAM's spread.

In my remarks with Secretary Kawamura, I stressed that APHIS will only use eradication strategies that are safe for the public and the environment. One strategy that we are very optimistic about is the use of sterile insect technology (SIT). APHIS' scientific experts are currently developing a SIT program with LBAM, and their progress has been very encouraging. In the near future, we anticipate that SIT could become a primary eradication tool in California. SIT has been successfully used in California against Medfly, Mexican fruit fly, and pink bollworm moth. Because of progress towards developing SIT for LBAM, aerial spraying of LBAM pheromones will not be used in urban areas.

We believe that the holistic approach APHIS and CDFA are taking utilizes the best tools and science available to us, and we look forward to our continued partnership with California as we work together to stop the spread of LBAM.”

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